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CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

AUDITOR

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NEWS RELEASE

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Clean Water Program Audit: Billing and Collection Systems could be improved

Vancouver, WA – The Auditor's Office has completed an interim report on the Billing and Collection Systems for the County Clean Water Program. Our review was performed to determine whether the fee assessments were computed in accordance with the Clark County ordinance and to assess the effectiveness and timeliness of collection procedures.

We found that while fees are computed in accordance with the authorizing ordinance, the available land-use data does not contain some of the details necessary to easily and accurately compute Clean Water fees. While satisfactory for property tax assessment purposes, in some cases a more detailed record may be necessary to determine if a fee should be \$29.70 or \$33.00. Only one percent of the total bills for the first two billing cycles have been recorded as disputes, and of those logged disputes, only 23 remain unresolved as of mid-March, 2002.

We found that the County has collected about 95 percent of all revenue billed for the first two billing cycles. Year 2000 delinquent accounts have already been sent to a collection agency and those outstanding from 2001 and from 2002 will be sent in September 2002.

The billing process for the Clean Water Program was implemented by modifying an existing billing and receipting system that was originally designed for Local Improvement Districts. This system does not generate an adequate audit trail of consistent management information, nor does it produce reports that contain data elements useful in managing collection efforts.

We are issuing this interim report at this time to provide staff with additional steps that can be taken to further improve the billing and collection process. We believe that (1) documenting decisions that interpret and clarify the authorizing ordinance will bring consistency to all billings; (2) providing additional financial and statistical information will help focus collection efforts; (3) actively involving Public Works staff in the process will assist in collection efforts; and (4) considering alternatives to the current billing and receipting system may result in more efficient and effective management of the process.

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